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YOU MEAN IT'S BEEN A YEAR? REALLY? IF YOU SAY SO . . .



I've just completed a cycle of one year as the managing editor of *The Pennant*. I appreciate the support, suggestions and comments I've received from the members of the PCA. You're a great bunch of folks. So, what have I learned in one short year? I thought you'd never ask.

Putting out *The Pennant* is lots of hard work. Fortunately very little of it seems to be done by me. The hard work label has to go to Tom and Dede Rehkopf, who herd copy, manage me and work with our designer, Fran Conn, as well as with our printer, Allen Press. All of that is hard work and Tom and Dede are volunteers. They do a wonderful job of making sure all of the behind-the-scenes work gets done.

A good designer can do wonders with good art and even more with great art. In this month's letters column, you'll find praise for the design of the last issue—the one I'll dub from henceforth as "The White Issue." Fran Conn did an outstanding job of taking some fairly minimal artwork and turning it into something memorable. I can't say enough about Fran's good work at making us look good in print.

I can't put out a magazine. Yes, that's right. I can't put out a magazine. It takes a lot of work from a lot of people to make this magazine happen. Most of all it takes content—and that, my friends, is the most rewarding and hardest part of this job all at the same time. It is rewarding when a cheerful volunteer steps forward and gives us some well-researched, thoughtful copy. It is hard to find myself listening to folks at pen shows tell me what we ought to be putting in the magazine and then disappearing like the fire alarm was pulled when I suggest they write that exact piece for us.

There are some really cool people involved in the PCA and being managing editor of this magazine has given me the chance to meet and talk to them when I otherwise may not have had those opportunities. So, for that, I'm thankful and I'm looking forward to the rest of my second year here.

And, as a final note, we are looking for substantive articles for future issues. While musings are often fun to read, we are the journal of the PCA and enough of you have said you want substance to make me know that content remains king here at *The Pennant*! Please, many of you have excellent research at your fingertips. I've seen the catalogs, sales brochures, flyers, salesmen's newsletters and the wealth of other materials out there. You've shown them to me proudly, and rightfully so. Now, how about sharing some of that with our readers—your fellow members? The best source of scholarship and in-depth articles is you, our membership base. You've spent thousands of hours and dollars to build your collections and expertise, so now is the time to share it and build our hobby.

Once again, thanks for giving me a great year in 2008. I look forward to talking to many of you in the coming year at pen shows and I'll be even more excited to see an article with your byline in the next issue.

Richard Jarvis, *Managing Editor*

FROM OUR PEN PALS

THE PENNANT HASN'T MISSED AN ISSUE

Dear Editor,

As a volunteer seven-year veteran of *The Pennant* staff, I take exception to the fact that Mr. Erano states in his recent article "Where Will The PCA Be Tomorrow?" that "the return of *The Pennant* is one important step" in the revitalization of the PCA. *The Pennant* has not gone anywhere. It has been in our mailboxes for the past seven years (and longer)—checked full of interesting, well researched articles on vintage pens, ephemera and related topics.

The real question is not where has *The Pennant* been, but rather where have the authors been? Any hobby publication relies on its community to publish original material and *The Pennant* is no exception. The staff has repeatedly called for articles, but it continues to be a struggle each issue to find enough copy to fill its pages. It is frustrating and perplexing as to why some in the pen community are often sniping at *The Pennant*, when they could be contributing instead of criticizing.

In the past seven years *The Pennant* has been through ten editors, three publishing houses and countless authors (many thanks to those who take the time to write articles—it is appreciated!). It has been worried over, discussed and promoted by a core group of pen enthusiasts and continues to be the reference publication on vintage pens. And yet, many in the pen community will write for other publications, websites, pen forums and for their own self-aggrandizement. For whatever reason—no pay (yes, we are a volunteer organization), bad karma, timing, petty jealousies, lack of willingness to share expertise, (add your own reason here)—many experts in the pen community are not willing to write for their own publication. Go figure.

Dede Rehkopf, Associate Editor, The Pennant

THANKS FOR ALL YOU DO!

Tom,

Thanks to you and the crew for your interest in our article "The Mysterious Click! Pen," which I just received in my new Pennant today. I was very pleased with the layout and the presentation of the article. Thanks for the work you do for *The Pennant*; it is greatly appreciated by all of us collectors, and contributes significantly to the enjoyment of our collecting addiction.

Mike Walker, Dallas, TX

CONGRATULATIONS

Dear Carla,

Thank you for your note of January 13th. It was most unexpected and appreciated. I am not at all affluent, but the small increases in my "dues" are a genuine appreciation and admiration of the continuing improvement of *The Pennant*. All of you deserve congratulations for the PCA's success and service to vintage pen collectors.

The assistance and generosity of Dan Reppert and Terry Mawhorter deserve my special thanks. Keep up the good work.

Bill B.

PCA SUGGESTIONS

Hello Paul,

I just read your article "Where Will The PCA Be Tomorrow?" in the latest *Pennant* (my first issue!) and thought I might take you up on your offer to respond with a few thoughts:

As an introduction to the source of these thoughts, I am an electrical engineer and very involved in the field of

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THE PENNANT



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ON THE COVER

Front cover: Sheaffer one-stroke plunger filler pen.
Back cover: Sheaffer one-stroke plunger filler pen and
siphoners from the collection of Tom Rehkopf. Photo
by Frank Cove.



Emerging Technologies, yet I seem to have the beginnings of an affinity for pens.

My first exposure to a pen show was last year in Chicago and although I was, frankly, overwhelmed, I attended this year's show in NJ. I attended Susan Wirth's presentation on handwriting improvement (using the "right" pen of course), and then spent a little time with a person at Susan Wirth's booth and was introduced to a number of pens with different nibs and allowed to write a bit with each to see how they "felt." (Bought a small Waterman with a "flex" nib—we are still getting to know each other).

I also joined the PCA after a brief but very convincing presentation by Kim Svalbfk who was very patient with a "newbie" like me. So, with that introduction, here are a few ideas that seem to resonate with me (as a newbie). Perhaps they will spark some ideas for you that are more viable and tempered with knowledge and wisdom of the pen world:

The experience of writing with a number of different pens and an explanation of the basics would be a good introduction for people unfamiliar with them. Perhaps this could not only be available at pen shows, but also at various other venues such as art shows, book stores, and at various pen vendors, not only like FPH in NY, but also at a card store or office supply store.

The aspect of children getting a "fed" for the pens is one that Kim brought up in her presentation regarding the "Pens for Kids" program. (I too had a cheap fountain pen in grade school—which was quickly confiscated after a number of unfortunate ink stain incidents). Since these are a number of ink vendors, perhaps they can concoct a formula that is washable, then offer it bundled with a few pens. These could also be promoted through school functions and PTA nights in conjunction with handwriting instruction and/or calligraphy.

Once again, these may be "old hat" and/or non-plausible, but just a response from a newbie. Thanks for taking the time to read this.

Jim Degeon

MORE KUDOS

Rick,

Congratulations on the best *Pennant* ever.

You are all doing a great job. PCA has come a long way with the quality of people working on it.

Boris Rice

Dear Richard,

My congratulations on an outstanding Fall 2008 issue of *The Pennant*. The articles are superbly however that's not what knocked me out of my saddle. It was the cover which is elegant, tasteful, colorful, vibrant and besides all that just great looking. I don't know who did the cover but to whoever did down here in Texas we would say, "You done good."

Will Thorpe

OOPS!

We appreciate all literary and photo contributions to *The Pennant* and believe that every contributor should be acknowledged for their work. Therefore, our apologies to David Isaacson whose pen photo on page 33 of the Fall 2008 issue was not credited to him. And, to Richard Greenwald for his photos of Bert Heiser's pens in the same issue as well as the cover photo which received the many kudos above.



THE BOOK

A BOOK REVIEW

by Tom Rehkopf

Script and Scribble:

The Rise and Fall of Handwriting

Kitty Burns Florey

Melville House Publishing, Brooklyn, New York, 2009.

\$22.95, 190 pages.



OKAY, SO THIS BOOK ISN'T about pens *per se*, but it's about writing with pens, and after all, isn't that the whole point? We pen collectors obsess about what our pens are made of, who made them, how scarce they are, what color they are, how much they cost, etc., etc., but sooner or later most of us actually sit down and write with our pens. Which brings us to Kitty Burns

Florey's *Script and Scribble: The Rise and Fall of Handwriting*.

Connecticut author and copyeditor Florey (author of *Sister Bernadette's Barking Dog*, a book on sentence diagramming; you've got to love anybody who could write a whole book on sentence diagramming) takes up the challenge of looking at the state of our handwriting today and how we got where we are. Written in a personal, easy-to-read style, the book is nevertheless well researched and factual in its presentation. Florey's approach is to take you through the historical background of her topic (there are chapters on "Pen, Paper, Ink—A Stroll Through Handwriting History," and "The Golden Age of Pennmanship") and then drop you quickly into the present with a series of observations, opinions and questions. There is even a section on pen collectors ("...there are still plenty of pen people in the world. I'm one of them. Even after the transition to ballpoints I remained nostalgically, almost romantically attached to my Esterbrook fountain pen."). The result is part history, part essay, and part opinion. It's an approach that is informative as well as entertaining.

The book sets the stage with the author recalling her school years growing up with first her pencils, then fountain pens and gradually transitioning through ballpoints, felt tips and, eventually, back to fountain pens. "I was very fond of my blue Esterbrook fountain pen, my collaborator in hours of scriptomaniacal experiments," she says.

IN THE HUNDRED-PLUS YEARS' HISTORY OF FOUNTAIN PENS, THERE have always been damaged pens that needed repairs. When original parts are available, then it is just a matter of swapping parts. As those supplies are depleted, used parts are scavenged from parts pens. Used parts for pens from major manufacturers, such as Parker Vac fillers, which were used in a variety of models over a decade or more, are fairly easy to find. For other parts, the search can be much harder. A member of my local pen club, who has an

pick and gradually pry off as much of the adhesive as possible. The older the adhesive, the harder it is to get rid of, because adhesive can crystallize as it ages. A 20/40X binocular field microscope is invaluable for this kind of tedious work.

Much harder than undoing adhesives are pens that have been taken apart by someone who decided not to do the repair because they were missing a part. Also difficult are "parts pens" that need to be made whole again. I once had a Namiki Vanishing Point that was missing its trap door spring. I got lucky on that one because I had just replaced a toggle switch on a heater and had taken apart the switch to see what was wrong with it. The springs that pushed the contact point in the switch turned out to be the right size and correct tension. It took a while to figure out how to push that spring back under the trap door; this, fine watchmaker tweezers turned out to be the right tool for the job.

In the following repair jobs I'll describe a couple repairs that took more than finding a spring and putting it back in.

Montblanc filler unit repair

Montblanc 334 1/2

unusual Parker from 1905 with a cracked cap, has been searching for a replacement since the early 1980s and still has not found one. The inability to find a correct part, thus resulting in repairs to damaged parts, has been a long time problem, affecting those who do their own repairs as well as professional repairers.

To undo someone else's repair takes much more time than repairing the original damage. Once in a while, I can't undo or reverse the repair. The common repairs that I come across that I need to undo are those using adhesives that either don't hold the parts together or result in an ugly repair. For plastics I use solvent welding, but before doing that I need to get rid of as much of the adhesive as possible. I can use adhesive solvent on some of them,

The 1937-1948 Montblanc 334 1/2 shown in the picture came in



Montblanc internal spiral threads and repaired filler.

for a cork replacement. These early telescopic filler units are generally robust and highly durable mechanisms. The first segment in the filler assembly is a tube with internal threads and a hard rubber cork fitting assembly crimped on. The second segment is a slide tube with two slots, one for a protrusion at the top of the first segment tube and another slot for a collar with a tab fitted on the hard rubber filler housing. These two slots prevent the first segment from rotating when the inside threads are turned, thus allowing the mechanism to telescope. If a cork became seriously

Montblanc 334 1/2 repair parts.

but on plastics this will create a thin layer of adhesive and shield the effectiveness of the solvent I use later. Instead I use a needle



Broken Lincoln lever.

frozen in the barrel and undue force was applied to the filler knob, then the tube above the slots can break. Also, corrosion can lock the slide tube to the first segment. When I pulled out the filler unit on the 334 1/2, the cork fitting assembly and a cork were in place, but the second segment slide tube was missing. The cork assembly was pinned in rather than crimped in and there were pry marks on the first segment tube. I figured that someone had pulled off the cork assembly and pried on the slide tube to loosen it. But in fitting everything back together, the "repairer" fitted the cork assembly on and pinned it in place without the slide tube. It was at this point that the pen came to me for repairs.

To start the repair, I pushed out the pin in the turning knob, unscrewed the knob from the mechanism and pulled the spiral gears out of the filler housing. I had a spare second segment tube, but it was broken at the top of the slots. Ideally I would have soldered the breaks in the slide tube, heated the hard rubber cork assembly and worked it out of the tube, and replaced the slide tube and cork assembly. On this one however, it looked like the cork assembly was both held by adhesive and pinned by something that looked like a thin steel rod with a jacket.

Concerned I would break the cork assembly if I tried to take it out, I decided to replace the second segment slide tube from the other end. Normally this is not possible, because the slide tube would not fit through the other end. However, in this case with the breaks on the slots, the tube opened up enough for me to fit it on. At the other end of the slots, one end is fixed while the other one is open, so it was not a problem to fit it on. The collar with a tab on the filler housing needed to be heated and gradually pried off and then fit into the fixed end at the bottom of the slide tube. I then fit everything back in the filler housing, heated it and pushed the collar back in place.

Next, I needed to fix the breaks at the top of the slots in the second segment. Soldering those breaks in place on the first segment had the danger of solder leaking behind the breaks and attaching to the tube behind it. I used three coils of stainless steel wire around

the top of the slots, twisted the ends together and used very strong epoxy adhesive to hold it in place. The wire is much stronger than the brass used in the slide tube, while the purpose of the epoxy is to keep the wire in place. After the epoxy had set, I tested the mechanism to make sure everything worked and fit the filler unit back in the barrel and checked it to make sure it would pull in water.

While this repair is both complicated and took a while, it was no more so than other repairs on these telescopic fillers, except in this case I needed to find a part.

Lever filler repair

I want to share this next repair on a filler lever that is fairly common on a variety of lever fillers.

The lever shown in the picture is from a Lincoln, and the lever is fitted with a pin through the barrel. The pull tab on the end of the lever had an original imprint and I decided to repair it rather than replace it with a generic one. The lever has an extension of 4-5 mm beyond the pin such that it pushes down on the pressure bar inside the barrel when the other end of the lever is lifted from the barrel. On this lever, that extension had broken off. Generally these levers from the end of the puller tab on are stamped into shape so that it looks like an inverted "U" underneath. What I had done before in these repairs was to machine a piece of brass rod so that a smaller diameter rod in front would fit into the "U." It's hardly difficult lathe work, but it does take time to set up the lathe and cut a small extension. For this repair, I found a brass rod that would fit inside the "U" and found a brass tube with the same inside dimension as the rod. After lightly soldering the rod in the "U," I slid on the tube and soldered all the parts together. Then I cut the extension to size and filed the bottom of the tube so there was a flat spot for the pressure bar.

This same method of using a brass rod and solder is a repair that works well on broken Waterman levers and other similar designs as well.

Sometimes you just walk away

Once in a while I can't find the solution to a very simple repair. The Filcaio shown in the accompanying picture was fitted with a sac from a batch that tended to liquefy over time. Anyone doing repairs during the past five years has come across these sacs. The result is a gooey, sticky mess inside the barrel.

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Repair for Lincoln lever.



FIFTY-TWO YEARS AGO, AN ENGLISHMAN NAMED REGINALD PIGGOTT GAVE eight weeks of his life to a long, hard look at his nation's handwriting—and shuddered. He disliked his findings so much that he had them published in 1958 as *Handwriting, A National Survey: Together with a Plan for Better Modern Handwriting!* Piggott's book gained much notice then, and continues to draw attention: at late as 2005, an article in *New Scientist* magazine found its results and recommendations still noteworthy.³ What does Piggott's work mean for today's devotees of good pens and good penmanship? Should pen-dorm replicate—and expand—his handwriting survey?

Reginald Piggott, cartographer, calligrapher, and freelance writer (still alive and scribing in Norfolk, England!) began his survey to answer frequent questions about handwriting. Piggott believed—and still believes—that improving handwriting requires accurately documenting its current state. To collect data on the state of handwriting, in December 1956 he asked newspapers, magazines, and radio stations throughout the UK to run an announcement requesting handwriting samples along with the writer's age, sex, occupation, type of pen used, and handedness. The announcement ran for eight weeks, bringing in over 25,000 samples—"much to the consternation of my postman," Piggott notes. See Figs. 1 and 2.

Piggott's published survey reproduces several hundred of these samples, representing a wide variety of returns. Many writers volunteered additional information, describing how they had learned handwriting, what had influenced their handwriting, and so on (Fig. 3).

Such helpful information unfortunately increased the bulk of the material and the difficulty in analyzing the data. Piggott therefore developed a graphing system to organize his findings, which is shown in Fig. 4. The results correlated personal information (occupation, age, part of the country, handedness, and so on) with handwriting features such as type of pen, color of ink, writing style, slant, and legibility. Fig. 5 shows a detailed section from one of Piggott's graphs.

As an example, consider Piggott's statistics on pen type for two occupations (sales representatives and business executives) out of the 26 covered. Among sales representatives, Piggott found 23.1% using fine-nibbed fountain pens, 36.5% using medium-nibbed, 13.2% using broad-nibbed, 23.3% using ball-points, and the remainder using other tools. Business executives revealed a different pattern: 16.1% fine-nibbed fountain pens, 43.2% medium-nibbed, 14.8% broad-nibbed, 24.7% ball-points, and the remainder using other tools.

For another variable—legibility—Piggott debunked one myth: doctors ranked only eighth worst in legibility. A mere 3.8% of MDs surveyed wrote almost illegibly, though 35.9% wrote in a manner "only moderately legible," as Piggott tactfully put it.

Even the most legible group (typographers) comprised 4.1% almost illegible writers and 29.8% "only moderately legible." Piggott deduced that British legibility had reached a nadir, and concluded that poor handwriting reflected poor instruction, including "the alarming divergence of handwriting styles and the methods of teaching them" [Piggott, p. 108] (Piggott avers today that the situation has only worsened: modern handwriting education combines stylistic chaos with an aversion to teaching any style thoroughly.) The second section of Piggott's book (his proposal for better national hand-

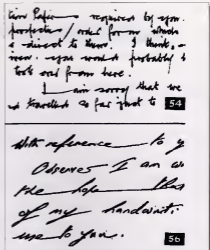


Fig. 1: Some samples irritated Piggott as much as his mailman...

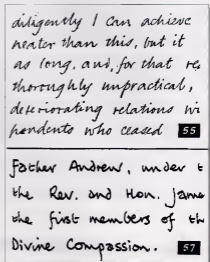


Fig. 2: ... others made the day more pleasant.

As each child entered the school she was taught the new writing in one lesson each week for a year. We were not allowed to use fountain pens only the steel 'Violin' nibs made by George Hughes of Birmingham. We used no other writing throughout our school life but

Fig. 3: The biography of a script – or scrawl.

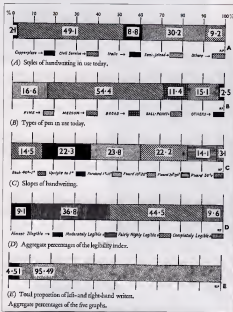


Fig. 4: Piggott's overall breakdown of significant handwriting characteristics for the mid-20th-century UK.



Fig. 5: A tiny section of one of Piggott's two-page graphic spreadsheets. This one correlates handwriting style (horizontal axis) with occupation (coded by numbers along the vertical axis: 11 = entertainers, 12 = farmers, 13 = housewives, 24 = transport workers, 25 = traveling salesmen, 26 = typographers).

writing) presents a simple Italic model with allowance for personal choices (Fig. 6), and illustrates how pen choice further individualizes writing (Fig. 7).

Considering pens led to considering left-handers' problems. At the time, few pen companies **More >>> 23**

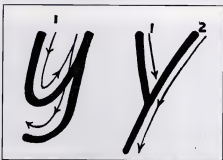


Fig. 6: The 'y's have it: variation in Piggott's Italic model (page 127).

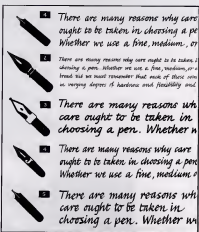


Fig. 7: Piggott illustrates the influence of pens on writing (page 130).

THE 2009 OHIO PEN SHOW

Columbus Brings in International Collectors

by Tom Rehkopf



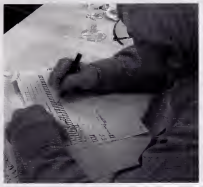
THE 14TH ANNUAL OHIO PEN SHOW was held Nov. 6-9, 2008 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Dublin, a suburb of Columbus. The show floor was completely sold out at 160 tables and, in addition to the broad range of U.S. exhibitors, the vendors included exhibitors from South America, Germany, Croatia, Italy, Canada and England. Show organizer Terry Mawhorter (who also puts on the Research Triangle Pen Show in June), aided by sons Ben and Matt and several volunteers, did the usual excellent job in putting on a great show.

This was one of the first shows on the circuit since the stock market started to tank, but despite that, public attendance was strong on Saturday, albeit a bit lighter on Sunday. Dealers and traders show up early for the Ohio show, and informal trading got under



way Wednesday night. Thursday and Friday were open to exhibitors and weekend pass holders only. Sales reports were mixed, but overall there did not appear to have been the big dropoff some had feared.

The Ohio show is one of the better shows for extra-curricular educational and fun activities, so if you weren't actually interested in buying or selling or trading pens (is there such a person?)



there was plenty to eat and learn. The wine and cheese party Thursday night was followed by the Pendemonium-sponsored pizza party Friday night, which was followed by the dessert party Saturday night, which was held poolside (indoor pool as it is in Ohio) before

(and during) the Saturday night auction just across the hall. Daytime activities included educational seminars by Deb Basel (calligraphy), Linda Bauer (Pens for Kids), Roger Cromwell (How to Buy and Sell Pens), Deb Green (wood turning for pens), Bruce Mindrup (plating), John Mortishaw (nibs), Klem Svabik (PCA), Susan Wirth (Finding the Right Pen), Susan Thom (journaling), and Ron Zorn (repairs).

The PCA held its annual membership meeting Friday, and presented the Board of Directors and officers for next year:

- ➔ Carla Mortensen—President
- ➔ Kim Sosin—Vice President
- ➔ Bill Hong—Secretary

Other board members include Richard Binder, Linda Bauer, Joel Hamilton, Deb Kinney, Ernesto Soler and past president Rick Propas. Further PCA news is available on the PCA website, www.pencollectors.com.

For those who like buying pens under pressure requiring 30-second snap decisions on pens you've never actually written with, Ohio featured not one, but two auctions. The Thursday night auction featured more than 80 lots, including a Parker T1 Soft tip (\$200), a Montblanc 252 in its original box (\$125), and a Parker jade Duoofol (\$225). The Saturday auction featured more than 100 items, including a Parker 75 vermeil set (\$275), Waterman 16 BHR (\$250), a Conklin NOS Endura Symmetrik with price sticker (\$600), a Chilton "clown" pencil (\$350), a Parker 61 prototype (\$375), a Montblanc 149 with silver cap bands (\$1,300) and a pair of Chilton "Golden Quill" pens (\$1,800). Most items met reserve and bidding was brisk. The complete auction catalogs are online at www.ohioopenshow.com.

The Ohio show is one of the best attended shows of the year, both by exhibitors and buyers. It remains one of the best shows for vintage pens. This year was no exception and, despite concerns over the economy, interest in buying, selling and trading pens seems to be as strong as ever. Plans are already under way for next year's show, which will be held November 5-8, 2009. *✍*

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OHIO SHOW IS A THREE-GENERATION AFFAIR

by Tom Rehkopf

Pen shows aren't usually thought of as places for a family get-together, but for one family the Ohio Show is becoming such a tradition.

Andy, Eric and Matt Regrut, ages 69, 41, and 10 respectively, convened at the Saturday session of the Ohio Pen Show to check out the pens and attend some of the workshops. Representing three generations of pen collectors, the Regruts find the pen show a great opportunity to get together to share a common interest.

Andy is from Pittsburgh and Eric and Matt are from Strongsville, Ohio. "We've all been collectors and pen users for a long time," said Eric. "I've been collecting and using pens for 23 years and Matt has been since he was four." Andy has been a collector/user for 51 years.

This was Eric's fifth Ohio Pen Show, and the second for Andy and Matt. "We all do our own thing at the show," said Andy. "We fan out and just start having a good time." Andy spends his time looking for Parkers (vintage and modern), while Eric is looking to expand his Pelikan and Sailor collection. "I'd also like to expand my vintage pen collection," he said. Matt is a tinkerer, and likes to poke through the cigar boxes of parts and user specials. He bought his first vintage pen at the show, a German piston filler.

Matt participated in last year's Pens for Kids scavenger hunt, but not this year. "It was a lot of fun," he said, "but this year I was too busy looking for pens."

The pen show gives the three Regruts a chance to spend a day together doing something they like. "All the rest of the family is off somewhere doing something while the three pen geeks come to the show. They just plan on us doing it," said Andy.

Columbus is the only show the Regruts come to. "We're thinking about expanding," said Andy. "We'd like to go to the D.C. show but haven't figured out yet how we can sell it to our families. We've been pushing the nation's capital—cultural attractions—summer vacation angle. We'll keep working on it." Given the combined will of three generations of pen collectors, it's a pretty good bet you'll see the Regruts at one of the upcoming D.C. shows, as well as Columbus next year.



Photos by Rick Compton, www.ircampton.com

THE 2009 PHILLY PEN SHOW

Philadelphia Show Draws Good Crowd

by Tom Rehkopf




THE 2009 PHILADELPHIA PEN SHOW was held January 23-25, 2009 at the Sheraton Philadelphia Center City Hotel. Attendance was good throughout the weekend, despite the usual small drop off on Sunday. All 100+ exhibitor tables were sold out.

The show was open Friday, Saturday and Sunday to the public, which made it easier for attendees to pick the day that worked best for them. Daily admission was \$8, with a three-day Platinum Pass going for \$25, which gave access to all weekend activities. The show opened to the public each day at 10 a.m., and stayed open until 7 p.m. on Friday night. Thankfully, the weather cooperated by offering up no frozen precipitation, although the temperatures could be described as bracing.

All the tables were set up in the Grand Ballroom, so it was not necessary to go out of the room to see other exhibitors. There was a good mix of both vintage and modern pens, and vendors reported that Saturday's crowd was as big as they could remember at a Philly show.

Show sponsors were Aurora, Stylus magazine, Libelle, Omas and Bertram's Inkwell. Show pens donated the featured door prize, a limited edition "Cradle of Liberty" pen, featuring an engraving of Independence Hall on the barrel. Only 10 pens were made in this edition of the series, which was created to highlight the history of Philadelphia and the nation.

Seminars were held throughout the weekend, including sessions by Deb Basel and Susan Wirth. The PCA had a table and sponsored the popular Pens for Kids scavenger hunt, which was supported by a generous donation of Kaweco fountain pens from Chuck Swisher.

The Sheraton Center City offered easy access to plenty of diversions for those who wanted to take a break from pen buying and selling, being within easy walking distance of Love Park, The Franklin Institute, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. But, despite these other attractions, the purpose of the Philadelphia Pen Show was to provide pen selling, buying and trading opportunities, and the vast majority of show attendees seemed bent on doing just that. 



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THE 2009 L.A. PEN SHOW

It Never Rains in Southern California

by Richard Jarvis

RAINY AND TEMPERATURES IN THE 40s? HMMM. I think Albert Hemmond must have missed the side of Southern California that greeted me as I left for LAX Friday afternoon on the L.A. Pen Show weekend.



But, as we all know, who cares what the weather is like outside when there is a pen show to go to and pens to be looked at? The L.A. Pen Show, on it's usual President's Day weekend, had plenty of pens as always, even if the weather outside was much more like Portland than L.A. True to its billing, the L.A. show is an international one and there were collectors and dealers from Europe, the Pacific Rim and South America at this year's show. While the economy may have kept some away, many of the show's regulars were there and trading, buying, selling



and talking pens all weekend. The international flavor was both on and behind some of the tables with lots of pens from Europe on the tables this year and quite a few tables featuring pens from Japan.

New pens were also in abundance with several manufacturers buying tables showing off new wares. There were also vintage pens aplenty on the tables. As always, Thursday, Friday and Saturday were the days for the weekend pass holders



to check out the many pens for sale as well as sift through the seemingly endless parts boxes piled high with the pieces necessary to bring some old favorites back to life.

Sunday is the public day at this show—making L.A. the last of the major shows with only one weekend day devoted to the public. Chicago has announced both Saturday and Sunday will feature hours open to the public. And, as always, a crowd gathered in the lobby before the show's public opening time of 10 a.m. on Sunday.

Dealers noted the economy did seem to have the buyers being cautious but more than one dealer noted sales "exceeded my expectations." Of course, they did qualify that by saying they expected slow sales coming into the show given the state of the economy. Others pointed out that buyers were being careful and buying lower-priced pens and the repair people in the room were kept busy all weekend as some chose to repair and restore what they already had in lieu of buying new pens. *RJ*

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Fountain Pens & Me (1912)

By Natsume Soseki Translated by Guy Yasko

WHEN I RAN INTO ROAN² THE OTHER DAY, I asked him how many fountain pens Maruzen³ sold each day. He told me that, on good days, they sell about one hundred. I also asked him how long a fountain pen would last. He replied that he knew of a person in Yokohama who had brought his pen into a shop and asked for the barrel to be replaced. The nib was still good, but the barrel had worn out. This fellow had bought the pen 13 years ago and, since it was his only pen, had used it every day since. Roan said that this was probably the longest a fountain pen had survived. When you think about it, a fountain pen usually comes with a six or seven year unconditional warranty, and that would seem to be the lifetime of the average pen. So considering that a product with such a long lifetime is selling at the rate of one hundred per day, it's not too far off to say that the circle of fountain pen users is expanding very quickly. Of course, among those fountain pen buyers are people who treat pens as a hobby. This is the type of fountain pen user who buys a pen, grows tired of it before it is worn out, buys another, and then soon afterwards, yet another. In this way, these hobbyists enjoy trying out different nibs and pen bodies, but I don't think it's likely that there could be so many in Japan today who are in a position to enjoy this hobby. Now, in the West there are people who have an affinity for pipes. These people like to line up a selection of their pipes—big, small, long, short—on top of the mantle or someplace. Looking at what they do as a form of collecting, these people who set out their pipes, who hunt for sake cups, or accumulate gourds are all moved by the same interest: a love for the sense of superiority that comes from the collector's power to make subtle and sensitive distinctions that beginners cannot grasp. Thus, even if it does have a practical side, fountain pen mania

cannot be distinguished from other forms of collecting. After all, if a collector has five or six of something that one could very well do without, there is certainly no big difference between that person and other types of collectors. As for the number of fountain pen collectors in Japan today, I don't think there is even one-tenth the number of pipe nuts in the West. Ninety-nine out of the one hundred fountain pens sold every day at Maruzen must go into pockets and onto desktops to fill the everyday needs of ordinary people. I don't know how many years it's been since fountain pens were first imported into Japan, but it seems indisputable that despite their relatively high price, fountain pens are becoming a very desirable item.

At the very top of the class, one fountain pen can cost up to three hundred yen⁴, and I have heard that even one of the expensive pens carried by Maruzen costs around sixty-five yen. Of course, the general demand is limited to the cheap type, which costs around ten yen. Yet even at this price a fountain pen still commands a price several hundred times that of a dip pen, which costs one sen⁵, or of a brush, which costs three sen. Considering the price, for more than one hundred fountain pens to sell each day can mean one of two things: either Japanese purchasing power has increased to a point where we can pursue items which, however useful, remain in the end a luxury item; or that fountain pens are now indispensable items which people must have at hand at all times, and the price of a pen reflects that need. That said, it would be foolish to attribute the popularity of pens to a single cause. I think both factors have contributed to stir up the demand for fountain pens, but in so far as the facts permit, I would prefer to stress the second explanation.

I confess that I am a novice without a deep connection to fountain pens, nor am I capable of lecturing others about them. You will understand my inexperience when I tell you that the first time I used a fountain pen was a mere three or four years ago, though I did receive one before I went to the West twelve years ago. A relative gave me a fountain pen as a goodbye present, but before I could use it, I lost it on the ship while trying to imitate a gymnast on his equipment. While I was abroad, I always used a dip pen. After I came back and found myself in situations where I had to write something, I would scratch out my ill-formed characters with an ordinary pen. I don't know why I suddenly got the idea to change to fountain pens three or four years ago—I can't remember the reason—but it's no mistake that my primary motivation was convenience. With absolutely no experience with fountain pens, I came home from Maruzen with two fountain pens by the name of "Pelican." I am still using those pens. Unfortunately, my impressions of my Pelicans were not very good. My Pelicans tortured me by randomly and spontaneously dripping ink on my manuscripts. And yet when I desperately needed them to put out black ink, they stubbornly refused my

NATSUME SŌSEKI

By Guy Yasko

Natsume Sōseki was the pen name of Natsume Kinnosuke (1867-1916), one of Japan's best known writers and often considered the greatest of the modern ones. As a young man, Sōseki studied architecture at Tokyo University, but drifted toward English and classical Chinese literature. After leaving school, he worked as a translator and English teacher while dabbling in literature.

The Meiji government chose Sōseki, along with a handful of other up-and-coming Japanese, to go study abroad. He spent two uncomfortable years in London, from October 1900 to December 1902. He took a post at Tokyo University on his return in 1903, and also began submitting writing to literary magazines.

Sōseki's first longer work—*I Am a Cat* (*Wagahai wa neko de ara*, 1905), was a sardonic take on Japanese intellectuals and the middle class told from the perspective of an absurdly self-important cat. The success of the book convinced him to become a professional writer, and went on to great success until his untimely death in 1916. His works take up not only the typical novelistic themes of love, marriage and family relations, but also issues such as Japan and Japanese culture's relation to the rest of the world.

The role of intellectuals in Japan and Japanese culture was also a concern for Sōseki. This is perhaps most evident in *I Am a Cat*, but his political themes are sometimes forgotten in the humour of the work. These political and social themes emerge perhaps more clearly in his essays and speeches and his later novels, *And Then* (*Sorekara*, 1908), *Goto* (*Mou*, 1910) and in *Kokoro* (1914), which, broadly speaking, deals with the problems of loyalty and nationalism brought to the fore by the suicide of General Nogi on the night of the Meiji emperor's funeral in 1912.

In this brief essay, Sōseki discusses his sometimes strained relationship with fountain pens. The production and use of fountain pens in Japan parallels the arc of Japan's rise in international standing, both in culture and industrial capitalism. Kunitomo Ikkansai had invented the *gobochiwaitsu*, a precursor to the fountain pen (*monshibitsu* in Japanese) in the Edo period, but fountain pens did not become popular until the import of Western pens after the opening of trade with the West. *Bandai Shikoku* in Yokohama, which is said to have been the first to sell a fountain pen in Japan in 1834, and the Maruzen bookstore, which sold Onoto pens, were the main centres of fountain pen distribution. Local production of fountain pens began almost as soon as fountain pens arrived in Japan, and by 1940, half of the world's fountain pens were made in Japan. It is easy to understand why a professional writer like Sōseki would have taken an interest in the tools of his trade. However, because fountain pens were emblematic of the West, the middle class, and intellectual production, Sōseki's self-deprecating humour evokes these broader concerns.



requests. Of course, as the owner of the Pelicans, I might not have been very kind to them, either. You see, I am lazy, and when I ran out of ink, I would carelessly put whatever ink was on my desk into them. And, because I don't like blue-black ink, I went out and bought some sepia ink, which I forced down my Pelicans' mouths without the slightest hesitation. To make matters worse, without much experience with fountain pens, I didn't understand how to handle my Pelicans. I must confess that no matter how dryly they write, I still have yet to try cleaning my Pelicans. With the Pelicans half giving up on their love for me, and with me half giving up on

the Pelicans, I retreated one era into the past and wrote my *To the Spring Equinox and Beyond* (*Higansugi Made*) with a dip pen.

However, once I made that decision, I discovered I had a lingering affection for the Pelicans I had laid aside. It was as if I were looking back fondly on my first wife. When I thought about what it was like to use an ordinary pen, I decided I could not stand the bother of interrupting my writing and dipping the pen in the ink pot every time the ink ran out. It is lucky for me that my writing isn't anything that could be finished faster by saving myself the trouble of stopping to dip, and by using an ordinary pen, I could freely use the sepia ink that I like. That is why I figured that I would keep pushing a dip pen until I finished my *Until the Equinox*. Nevertheless, there was ever so slight an air of rationalisation at the bottom of my decision. Even if my writing requires no special emphasis on mechanical convenience, and even if I thought that my fountain pen purchase might have been a mistake, and even if I was therefore a little weary of fountain pens — even I felt a loss without mine. Whatever value others put on their fountain pens, the people who buy them do so to meet a perceived need. They would not abandon their brushes and dip pens without good reason. Fountain pens do not sell merely because they are luxury items or toys suited to wealthy boys and young nobles.

Endnotes: ¹Uchida Roan was a Meiji writer and translator. ²A Tokyo bookstore selling Western books as well as pens and other stationary items. Maruzen was one of the first importers of fountain pens. ³In 1912, one yen was 1.5g or gold, or in currency, just about one American dollar. ⁴One sen was one-hundredth of a yen. ♪

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New Pen Turners



by Dede Rehkopf

AMAZING. AS I LOOKED AROUND at the new tables at November's Ohio Pen Show I spied some pretty interesting and unusual items. Seems there are more and more new pen turners every year. Everything from wood to acrylic to blends to things I never even heard of before! And they are not only making pens—fountain pens, ball points, roller balls—but letter openers, wine stoppers, jewelry... you name it, it's probably being made.

I first stopped at the table of Harry Blake. Harry had some amazing turnings on his table. Seems he has been turning for about three years and uses wood and acrylic materials in his work. He makes fountain pens, roller balls, ballpoints, pencils, letter openers, bottle stoppers, kaleidoscopes, tops for old Ink bottles and many other unique items. Harry goes to three shows a year—Columbus, Raleigh and D.C. and is based in Richmond, Va. Special orders for corporate clients keep him busy.

Carl Seidl was my next stop. Carl has been turning for five years and makes pens from a variety of materials—wood, acrylic, animal horn as well as others. Carl also makes replicas of "51's", Duofolds, Vacumatics and turns old Vacumatics into roller balls. He can replicate most any fountain pen, which has become a specialty.

Patricia Lawson and Richard Kleinhenz have been turning for 10–12 years, so they are by far the most experienced of those I spoke with. Patricia is from the West Coast and Richard is from New York, so they get together for shows in D.C., Boston and Ohio. They use wood polymer products as well as ivory, hard rubber, ebonite, abalone and stone for their fountain pens, ballpoints, roller balls, pencils and other interesting items. Richard's specialty is wooden inlay pens. Exquisite work—if I had one, I'd be so enamored of the work I'd forget to use the pen for what it is intended!

Scott Meyer has been turning pens for about five years, but he is mostly turning for other pen dealers at the moment. I got to hold his latest creation for Roger Cromwell, the Penoply Dipper Pen, which was a real treat.

By far the youngest turner is William Breuer at age 13. William became interested in pens through grandparents Cyndie Schlagel and Dan Reppert several years ago and has become a fixture at the Columbus show. William has an engaging personality and has quickly made friends with many in the pen community. They have willingly shared advice and suggestions and William returns the favor by asking more questions.

This year he showed off his newly acquired pen turning skill. He turns fountain pens, roller balls, ballpoints and pencils. He prefers working in wood—exotic, domestic, burl and dyed, but has tried acrylic materials.

William turned his first pen on Christmas Day, 2007. He uses his own equipment purchased with money made from pens and fair prize money and has an assembly bench set up in a closet. He is the son of Don and Erica, Iowa farmers. William helps around the farm (as it is a working farm, he is

allowed to drive the farms trucks, tractors, and four-wheeler) and has even won several blue ribbons at the Iowa State Fair for cattle and sheep as well as a blue ribbon for his pen turning. And just to prove it's not all about pens, William also won a blue ribbon for his raspberry jam! In addition to being in honors math and science, playing drums in the school orchestra and singing in the choir, William hunts, fishes, and plays golf.

William's sister Sophia was at the show learning pen turning from Deb Green, so next year there might be two tables of Breuer pens!

Deb Green was again set up to turn pens—complete with lathe and sharpening wheel. She was involved with a weekend project from Woodcraft, a sponsor of Turnings for the Troops, provides kits for pens sent to troops in the Middle East and Walter Reed Medical Center. Deb typically turns 50 pens a year for the program, but she prefers to upgrade the provided kit to a more substantial one.

Deb started turning five years ago when she switched hobbies. She now makes fountain pens, ballpoints, roller balls, pencils, magnifying glasses, letter openers and many other items using wood, acrylics, bone and hard rubber. In addition to turning for the troops, she took time to teach turning to several young people. After a few instructions, they took off turning, turning one for the troops and one to keep. The pens looked great and the turners were very proud of their new found skills!

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Abound



Clockwise from upper left: Scott Meyer; Sophia Breuer with Deb Green; Carl Seidl; William Breuer; Patricia Lawson and Richard Kleinhenz; and, center, Harry Blake.

Diamond

by Marc Kolber, edited by David Moak • Pens from the collection of Doris Kolber

Part V: Final Installment

This article is an edited version of Marc Kolber's memoirs of his family's pen business, the New Diamond Point Pen Co. The original notes were hand-written over a period of time, resulting in some chronological confusion that I have attempted to correct. The first pages were written around April 1985, the rest after November 1993. Marc Kolber died Jan. 26, 2003. Any changes in the text have been made for the sake of clarity. When Kolber began writing these notes, the original intent was to prepare an article for *Pen Fancier's Magazine*. Doris Kolber, Marc's widow, passed the notes on to Rick Horne, and has graciously allowed them to be shared with the pen community. Doris Kolber also cleared up some points that had confused me. The final installment of this series begins with the dawn of the ballpoint era—if somewhat tentatively—and also wraps up the family story for Kolber himself leading up to the final years of the company. —Ed.

A new challenge emerges

One morning in November 1945 our phone was ringing off the hook. Friends were calling to ask if we had seen the morning newspaper. Gimbel's had run a large ad featuring a new type of pen, a ball pen, the Reynolds Rocket. What a shocker to a fountain pen factory! After a few calls we realized the pen people were going "bonkers."

We were caught off guard. We should have had prior knowledge. I'm sure it wasn't a well-kept secret. Yet none of our people inside or outside ever heard even a whisper about this pen. Speaking with industry people, no one admitted to prior knowledge. We could not decide if this introduction of a new pen was good or bad for our future. Naturally we kept watch on the goings on at Gimbel's. The ball pen made a big splash at Gimbel's with the Reynolds pen in 1945. Sales were brisk, \$100,000 on the first day alone. At that sale price of \$12.50, money was pouring in. During that first week, we conversed with our suppliers—often.

In the meantime, we looked into what we had to do. We found those already working at the challenge were making progress and getting plenty of information. Several advised it wouldn't take too long to be able to produce the new parts necessary to make a ball pen. Speaking to a group of others in the business, someone pointed out that the United States Navy had used a ball-feeding apparatus to paint the sides of its battleships since the end of the war.

Fountain pen manufacturers scrambled to catch up and create something new, something original. We tossed our special pen into the fray late in 1946. Our entry was a three-in-one fountain pen, ball pen, and pencil set presented in a beautiful gift box.

We used a piece of pencil stock cut to the right size for a pencil mechanism. Then we cut another piece made to grip the front end of the cartridge of the ball pen, adding a bushing to attach the two pieces together. We now needed a cap, and caps were readily available. Our cap wasn't threaded; it had a seam for a force fit over either end of your



Dreams



new combination ball pen/pencil. The standard fountain pen matched this new contraption handsomely.

The idea was novel and neat, but we had some worries about how many people would buy and use such a distinct oddity. Well, the answer was that after starting production we could not keep up with the demand. The sets sold well for the 1946 holiday season. Many manufacturers wasted time fooling around because someone beat them to the punch. A few, like Diamond Point, felt forced to come up with an answer. For us it turned out terrific!

A surprise call

One evening, I arrived home at about midnight to a very perplexing call. I had to return to the factory. The New York City fireman on the other end of the line advised that he had put out a fire under one of the workbenches, but they now had things under control.

Finding a cab at that hour was almost impossible. Reaching the building, everything appeared normal. But that wasn't true on the eleventh floor. The firemen had to rip up a twelve foot long workbench, with machinery mounted thereon, exposing a wooden floor burnt to a crisp. The fire captain advised that one of the machine operators had neglected to turn off his motor when he left his machine. The motor sparked after overheating. The next day we stayed closed and everybody chipped in cleaning the area so all could work the following day. The repair people arrived and went to work; it took them several days, because they avoided interfering with our machine operators. Insurance covered the costs. The otherwise capable operator was admonished and returned to work.

Some good did come of this incident. Our electricians installed a master switch that cut off power to all machinery but one, and they put in a separate cir-





DIAMOND POINT — FILL-E-Z —

cut to the polishing tumblers that usually ran all night. The last one out had to pull the master switch that shut off the rest of the power.

Managing inventory

Every once in a while manufacturing got ahead of sales. This is like a red light flashing in the stock room. It would be time to reduce our inventory, empty some bins and make room for new production arriving each and every day. We had eight cabinets in which to store all finished goods. There were seven shelves in each cabinet, and four bins on each shelf. That's an awful lot of writing instruments when you came to think of it—pens, pencils, and desk pens, as well as some odds-and-ends lots that would occur on occasion.

Luckily our shelves were never full. We were able to create room quickly when needed.

Off-season presented additional challenges. You want to keep your employees working as long as possible; if business has been good it works, but sometimes it is just impossible to keep piling up finished merchandise. We would be forced to close down the pen works when that happened. It would typically have to be for an extended period of time to enable our employees to collect unemployment insurance payments. The fact is that many of our employees welcomed this shutdown as an excuse to go places and do things, having a very much-appreciated vacation. I couldn't do this. I had to be satisfied with a one-week vacation when we closed down for inventory reduction. Sometimes I envied my employees being able to stay at home for a couple of months each year; not many objected. It sounded good to me.

Onyx success

In the space of about two years, the onyx business outsold the pen factory, so we ended up with two successful businesses. The popularity of the onyx products was welcome news to the many retailers who were now new customers of Diamond Point. Our sales representatives made every effort to increase retail sales for our customers and assist with displays of Diamond Point onyx merchandise in the stores. We continued to design items that were most useful to the family while doing their paperwork, homework, or other home chores. We started out with about ten items, but soon started producing more than 100 items, expanding whenever something new was available to us. By 1946, we were to have over 150 different items in our planned new line.

Mr. Heinz Zimmermann, a Diamond Point supplier of onyx bases from Hanau, Germany, had a proposition for us. He had already forwarded some samples of a green onyx. The color was absolutely magnificent, like nothing I had ever seen. Should he place an order for eighty tons a carload? Would it be of interest to us? The price would be right. I immediately affirmed our interest, encouraging him to send additional information. This would give us an entirely new color.

The trick was getting the stone from a quarry 10,000 feet high in the Himalayas, and then transporting it down the mountain. Would people function at hard labor at that altitude? I suppose it has been done before. I was sure Mr. Zimmermann would



get the answers. If we could overcome these difficulties, I believed it would be well worth the effort. The only other green onyx we had ever used before came out of Brazil. It was most costly, giving it a limited market in the United States.

Tragedy

Feb. 3, 1947, was the saddest day of my life. Mr. K passed away that morning. He suffered heart problems and was under the care of a specialist. A stroke took him with no warning. His illness had worsened in the prior two years, weakening his body. Though I tried to reduce his duties at the business so he could remain at home, it was not to be. He insisted on keeping to his usual work schedule.

After attending to his personal needs that morning, he began to dress. Members of my family heard a troubling noise from his bedroom. Upon entering they found him bent over putting on his shoes. He was in a bad way. One put him to bed, another phoned his doctors, and I received an urgent call. I rushed home, after first ordering the factory closed and sending everybody home.

I entered his bedroom. He reached for my hand and squeezed it. I stepped aside so the doctors could attend to him. I realized he was failing. In the next few moments he was gone. I am glad I got home in time to see him.

Mr. K was always a man who knew what he wanted in life. He was born a businessperson. Ever since his arrival in the United States as a youth, he always set goals for himself, which he attained.

Upon his death, Rose Kolber and I inherited equal shares in Diamond Point, though we had to take on a partner as an investor in the company to keep everything solvent.

More family changes

In 1947, after the death of Mr. K, my sister Rose met a man she liked. He was a widower with a son, a pharmacist who owned his own pharmacy in Springfield, Mass. He would arrive in New York on occasion, usually with plans to attend a Broadway play or some musical production. They seemed to be getting along famously. The relationship blossomed into more than just friendship.

One day, Rose approached me. She wanted to discuss her situation. She had certain commitments and connections etc. Now that Mr. K was gone she and I controlled Diamond Point equally, with an outsider holding a one-third interest in the company. She managed the office and finances; the rest was my responsibility. We consulted as frequently as necessary.

She also shared the responsibility for our widowed mother. Rose, mother, and I lived harmoniously together. Would I stay with mother if Rose were to marry and move to Springfield? I stated that I expected no change in the foreseeable future.

The question of Diamond Point's future was important to the two of us. Would she want to keep her stock or work something out? We agreed to a plan where she would sell most of her stock back to the company. I purchased enough shares to give me control. This arrangement worked well for all concerned. Rose married in Jan. 1949. She moved



to Springfield to live happily ever after. In the ensuing years, she invested her money in a good venture. She and her husband opened two large pharmacies and operated them profitably for many years. They sold the company to their employees many years later.


A Chance Encounter

We were getting ready to close the factory for the Fourth of July week. We always took our vacation of nine or ten days then. After that, we came back refreshed and ready for a busy holiday season. That night I closed the plant myself and walked to the station to catch the train that would carry me home to Long Island Beach, where we had a summer rental. Everyone was waiting for the train doors to open. It seems there was a malfunction—the doors opened but immediately closed again. No one could get aboard.

A young lady standing nearby struck up a conversation with me about the doors. When the doors finally opened, we entered and sat down together, still conversing about nonsense. I found out that Doris also lived in Long Beach. Time passed quickly and we soon arrived at our station. We both left the train and started walking in the same direction. I offered her a ride home. She declined, saying that she lived just down the street. I then asked for and received her phone number.

When I arrived home, my mother said she had food for me if I wished to eat in. I decided instead to call Doris, and invited her out for a bite to eat and an evening at the races running at Roosevelt Park. She accepted, and we spent a very pleasant evening getting acquainted, eating, and watching the horse races. We had no luck with our betting. I should say we did better than expected with this first date together. I believe we both enjoyed getting to know each other.

After this first date we became good friends, getting together frequently. One evening for no reason at all, we stopped off at my home and visited with my mother. By now, summer was almost over. My mother and I went back to our Brooklyn apartment. Doris and her parents moved back to Jackson Heights. It became a little difficult to get together on working days. We met in Manhattan frequently, had dinner together and went our separate ways home. Within six months, however, we headed for the altar, marrying on Dec. 16, 1949. The marriage, and the company, prospered.

Editor's note: Doris and Marc Kolber remained married until Marc's death on Jan. 26, 2003. The New Diamond Point Pen Co. was sold to Park Sherman, Inc., a division of Ketchum & McDougal Inc., in 1970. 

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Having done a few of these sacs, I have learned to squirt some alcohol on the sac to make it less sticky and break down the rubber bonds further. Since this Filcao is a burton filler, I typically use a thin stick introduced through the filler end and wrap the sac around it like taffy and pull it out.

I knew on these pens that the nib unit and section screwed into a brass fitting at the bottom of the barrel. I first tested the barrel to see if it was a pressure fit over the brass fitting, but after several attempts at beating the barrel and trying to pull off the section, nothing was moving. The brass fitting was either glued in or screwed in. Since gluing in a section on a production sac pen didn't make any sense, it had to be screwed in. I found the right sized extractor, beated the barrel and started to unscrew the brass fitting. I still could not feel any movement. I was perplexed, and this is a very good time in any pen repair to put the work aside for a day or two. Never work on a pen in frustration because you will invariably cause damage.

A day or so later, I remembered that gooey rubber is a very good adhesive. It's so obvious—when you're not frustrated. So, more alco-



Filcao burton filler pen.

hol, more cleaning, more heat and the brass fitting came right out. My frame of mind for this job was that it was simple and messy. Since I was not going to enjoy the messy part, I focused on the simplicity with the result that I missed the obvious: the gooey mess was going to seep into the brass threads and make it very tight.

Good pen repair to one and all! *✍*

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Handwriting, from >>> 9

produced left-handed nibs, and those available (left-obliques) did not suit those numerous left-handers who hook their wrists to write. Examining this problem, Piggott in 1958 proposed and illustrated what we now call the "cranked" (or acute left-oblique) nib (Figure 8).

Piggott's proposal reached Osmiroid, who in the early 1960s began producing this nib, continuing until Osmiroid folded in 1999. (Since about 50% of left-handers use the "hooked" position which this nib accommodates, let us hope with Piggott that another pen manufacturer can recreate this nib.)

Time to learn more: proposing a worldwide handwriting survey

Over a half-century after Piggott published his findings, the handwriting world has yet to equal his research. The volume and organization of Piggott's snail-mailed, hand-tabulated data would do credit to modern marketing researchers boasting high-speed Internet connections and survey software. Handwriting competence (shaky even in 1958) has arguably fallen worldwide—but on this matter, we lack the solid evidence that Piggott secured for one country a half-century ago.

Pendom needs to know the current state of handwriting. Once, a worldwide handwriting survey would have daunted even Piggott. Today, the Internet permits international surveys with far less effort than Piggott expended surveying just one country. Websites can replace costly ads, allowing a survey to run continuously worldwide. Accepting scans of writing (or scanning originals as they arrive) reduces storage space and filing costs.

The time has come to take the pulse of the world's handwriting. I hope pendom

can unite on this goal, to inform and benefit all who use handwriting and pens. *✍*

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¹ Piggott, Reginald. *Handwriting: A National Survey, Together with a Plan for Better Modern Handwriting*. London, 1958: George Allen & Unwin.

² Vine, Gail. "Histories: The Big Scribble." *In New Scientist* (issue 2505), June 25, 2005, pp. 54-55. Retrieved from newscientist.com/article/mg18625051700-histories-the-bigscribble.html.



Fig. 8: Designed by Piggott, built by Osmiroid: the nib with a hook for "hooked" lefties.

THE REBIRTH OF

SHEAFFER'S

'ONE-STROKE'

PLUNGER FILLER

BY GERRU BERG

SHEAFFER'S PLUNGER-FILLERS OF THE 1930S AND 1940S HAVE EXPERIENCED something of a renaissance in the past few years owing to the efforts of innovative restorers and craftsmen. The run-down dumpy plunger-fillers that filled the rummage bins at shows and appeared in blurry pictures on eBay used to be routinely avoided as an all-too-demanding a project and a fickle performer as well. Now, however, they've become a potential example of the most efficient fountain pen ever produced. Considering the complexity of restoring a Parker Vacumatic, one wonders why the Sheaffer plunger-filler followed so far behind the "Vac" in popularity among vintage collectors.

Understanding the basic principle

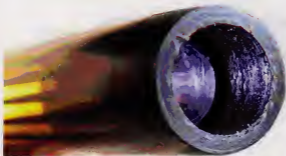
As always, we start by understanding the working of these nifty machines before moving on to address current restoration techniques.

One group of collectors loves this part of our hobby: all those magnificent patent drawings that embody the best of Newtonian mechanics. Another group, perhaps the largest, wants to skip right over the mechanics, lest the memory of high school physics rise to haunt them.

I belong to the former group, with great sympathy for the latter. For those bored with mechanics, all I can say is that there's nothing quite as magical as confounding one's intuitive sense of things

when the entire barrel of a pen fills up with ink after pushing a plunger down into the barrel. It's like watching the sun stop in the sky and then set in the east!

To explain why this happens, we turn to the inner working of the pen as described by its designers in the first two of Sheaffer's patents in 1933 and 1934 (US patents # 1,926,405 and 1,983,682), which were alleged to be refinements of Onoto's plunger-filler of 1905. Remember, these pens are the ones that show a thin rod when you pull out the blind cap. Sheaffer factory technicians referred to such pens as "wire" pens (hat tip to Ron Zorn). Those that reveal a chromed cylinder instead of the "wire" or rod are called Touchdown fillers, which arrive on the scene only in the late 1940s after plunger-fillers are discontinued. They work on different principles and hold considerably less ink than their earlier brethren, the plunger-fillers, to which we now return. In our discussion we will stick as close as possible to terms used in the original patent drawings, which have been simplified in Fig. 1.



After pulling the plunger rod from the end of the barrel, ink or air contained within the pen barrel is expelled as the plunger rod is pushed back to its closed position, creating a vacuum in the barrel behind the rod's piston head. When the plunger reaches the limit of its movement, the piston's flexible washer enters an enlarged portion of the barrel's bore and releases the vacuum behind the piston head. Ink is drawn in around the periphery of the washer and into the barrel. In this manner, nearly the entire internal volume of the barrel stores ink, thus increasing the pen's ink capacity over its rivals.

The packing unit

The key to restoring this system to efficient operation is recreating the right fit of the plunger rod in the barrel. This means repacking the packing unit.

The packing unit is known as the "barrel plug" in the Sheaffer patent descriptions. It consists of a short tube of plastic that fits into the end of the barrel. The exterior end of the tube has threads which hold the blind cap. The tube itself is filled with felt and rubber disks that hold the plunger rod tightly enough to create an air-tight seal even under pressure.

From left to right in Fig. 2 are the packing unit tube and its contents: two felt disks, two rubber disks, and a closing washer. Above it is an early packing tube that is threaded to screw into the barrel.

In the next illustration (Fig. 3), you'll see the end of the barrel with the packing unit removed. Inside, you can see the ledge on which the packing unit rests when inserted into the barrel. Note the thickness of the barrel walls. This is a hallmark of the sturdiness that characterized Sheaffer's pens of the 1930s.

The piston assembly

The second part of system that creates the right fit of the plunger rod in the barrel is the piston assembly, which is fitted onto the rod on the end closest to the nib (see Fig. 4). The critical part of this assembly is a flexible washer that is secured to a rigid and concave backing washer by a small "closing" nut. Starting from the right in Fig. 4, you can see the stainless steel piston rod, the concave backing washer, the flexible washer, and the conical closing nut. Above those parts is the assembled piston.

Fig. 5 shows the assembled piston inserted into the barrel of a plunger-filler, in this case a 1930s Balance demonstrator (7W).

Creating a strong vacuum that will suck in the ink depends on the integrity of two seals, one secured by the packing unit around the rod and the other by the fit of the flexible washer against the internal wall of the barrel. Both seals must be tight enough to create a vacuum of sufficient strength to fill the pen, but must also allow the rod to move easily enough to be actuated without fuss by the average pen user. The restoration must, in addition, produce a pen that will fill reliably when used continually over a long period of time.

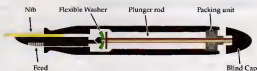


Fig. 1. Sheaffer One-Stroke. Image by Norm Berg, from original diagram by Richard Binder.

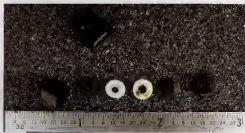


Fig. 2. Packing unit washers.



Fig. 3. End of barrel with packing unit removed.



Fig. 4. Piston assembly.



Fig. 5. Assembled piston in barrel of Balance demonstrator.

Restoration techniques—packing unit

The packing unit presents the first difficulty in the restoration process. It is hard to get at. Sheaffer designers originally envisioned rather easy access to it by threading the portion that fit into the barrel. The repair required only that the unit be unscrewed from the back of the barrel and either repacked or replaced.

For unknown reasons, however, the threaded packing unit did not continue in production much past the mid-thirties. Thereafter it was swaged into the barrel by means not yet fully understood. A repair thus required knocking the packing unit out of the barrel, or leaving it in place to work on it via the nib end of the barrel.

The first of the modern restorers, represented by Frank Dubiel and Fr. Terry Koch, solved the packing unit problem simply by ignoring it, an elegant approach at the time. Instead of repacking the unit, they would stop up the end of the barrel by shoving a pink rubber "plug" down the barrel to fit over the end of the packing unit (Fig. 6).

The plunger rod, complete with a new washer would then be fitted back into place. It would run through the both the useless old packing unit as well as the new rubber "plug," which now provided a sufficiently tight fit around the plunger rod to create a vacuum as originally intended.

Yet, rarely was the vacuum sufficient to fully fill the pen, in part because the rubber gasket reduced the size of the barrel in which a vacuum could develop, and, in part, because, over time, the gasket material lost its flexibility and its grip on the rod. Moreover, some restorers claim that ramming the gasket down the barrel would, in time, distort the barrel's shape. Others suggest that, although the red rubber gasket method doesn't operate very efficiently, it is a good way for newbies to learn about the properties of plunger-fillers and a harmless stop-gap until a better system is applied. They claim that the "plug" system is completely reversible with no damage done.

Nowadays, a better approach is considered to be one that entails the re-packing of the original packing unit. One starts on the inside of the pen by destroying the rigid plastic washer which seals the packing unit (see Fig. 2, the ring on the far right). This exposes the unit's contents, which are then removed to make way for new materials consisting of a synthetic rubber o-ring and a rigid styrene washer to hold the o-ring in place. The whole process is made much simpler on the earliest versions of the plunger-filler that have packing units with threads on the barrel end so that they could be un-screwed from the barrel for repair

(see Fig. 2). Those models are fairly rare, having been made only at the very beginning of production. They were replaced by packing units that were not designed to be removed from the barrel. If they needed fixing, Sheaffer repairmen of the day were instructed to drill them out and insert a replacement.

Nowadays, the original packing units are not replaced, but repacked. To do this, some experts remove the packing unit from the barrel by various means, while others prefer to leave the packing unit in the barrel and work on it from the nib section end of the barrel as described above.

It should be noted as well that although re-packing the original unit is the popular approach, some restorers have devised alternative methods. One highly respected penmeister inserts a cork disk instead of the o-ring into the emptied packing unit, claiming similar seals used by Onoro at the beginning of the twentieth century were very efficient and durable. Another repair person I've talked to replaces the old packing unit with an entirely new one of his own design and manufacture. One way to spark a lively discussion among plunger-filler experts is to ask which method is best. The results could provide *The Pennant* with a whole series of articles!

Restoration techniques—washers

Next we look at the washer on the piston head—the one that creates a vacuum behind it as it moves down the barrel toward the nib. This item received relatively little attention until recently. Of course, the key here is getting the washer of exactly the right dimensions; its diameter must be big enough to create a strong seal against the inside of the barrel, yet not too small to lose vacuum. Fortunately for all of us, there were only three sizes of washers used during the entire run of Sheaffer plunger fillers.

The washer also has to be the right thickness and softness so that it when it is clamped between the hard concave backing washer and a closing nut, the flat flexible washer assumes the same concave shape as the rigid backing washer. Too thick and it will cup too much and not contact the barrel walls properly. Too thin, and it won't be strong enough to hold the required vacuum.

Seeking to improve this washer's efficiency, Sheaffer repairmen have recently given the humble piston washer a closer look. I won't get into the issue of appropriate materials since that would require a separate article on synthetic rubber chemistry (by an author versed in such things). One of the current areas of interest focuses on the pure mechanics of the washer's operation within the barrel. It seems Sheaffer designed the washer to assume the cupped position only on the

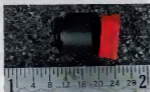


Fig 6. Packing unit and pink rubber plug.

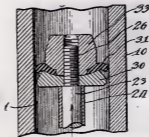


Fig 7. Patent drawing showing washer edges trailing behind piston head.

up stroke when the rod is pulled out of the pen (see Fig. 1). That made it easy for the user to draw out the rod since the sides of the cup would create little resistance against pen barrel. On the downstroke, however, the reverse motion of the rod would turn the cupped washer inside out, its outermost edges trailing behind the piston head. That, at least, accurately describes the Sheaffer patent's description, and I've included a drawing from that patent (Fig. 7), showing the washer with its edges trailing behind the piston head.

I am very reluctant to accept this picture as an accurate portrayal of what does in fact happen to the washer while it slides down the barrel and creates a vacuum behind it. I think it remains cupped. I say this after observing loads of them in transparent barrels that work superbly and fill the entire visible window of the barrel with ink. I'll go out on a limb here and say I think Sheaffer engineers described the inverted cup in order to distinguish their patent from the 1903 Onoto one, which provided the same kind of filling system except that the washer was actually molded into a cup shape and remained cupped throughout the filling action. Take a look at the drawing (Fig. 8) of the piston head on the Onoto Magna from Marshall and Oldfield, *Pen Repair*, p.140.

The Onoto's rigid backing washer was flat. As the rod is pushed down the barrel toward the nib (leftwards in the illustration), the washer remains cupped. I believe this is exactly what happened in most of those Sheaffer plunger fillers manufactured in the 1930s and 1940s as well as those restored today by most professionals. Some pen pros, however, insist that on the downstroke, the flexible washer should bend back behind the rigid washer just as the patent drawing indicated.

Feed tails

There's another nifty issue regarding the humble piston washer. The problem actually concerns the possible destruction of the washer when it comes into contact with Sheaffer's infamous "long-tailed feed". Here again, we return to patent drawings. The 1939 patent drawing (patent #2,158,615, Fig. 9) shows clearly how the conical closing nut on the piston's head comes into contact with a "tail" (#32) which protrudes from the end of the barrel and nudges aside the plunger rod's closing nut. Notice in the drawing how one side of the flexible

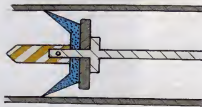


Fig. 8. Piston head on Onoto Magna.



Fig. 9. Patent drawing showing closing nut contacting feed tail.



Fig. 10. Various feed tails.

washer (#30) is pushed into the barrel wall, leaving space on the other side.

The intention here was two-fold. First, as the rod was pushed aside by the feed's tail, the incoming flow of ink would have a wide path around the washer—at least on one side of the barrel. Second, the conical closing nut would come to rest actually touching the feed's tail and so establish a continuous capillary route for ink to

flow from the barrel (#15) around the piston head and into the feed (#32). Sheaffer engineers claimed this would prevent an air pocket from forming in front of the piston that might inhibit the flow of ink during filling.

It certainly sounds reasonable, and I have little reason to question the talents of Sheaffer engineers. Interestingly, however, the earliest plunger-fillers they retailed did not have such feed "tails" nor did they have conical closing washers. Their pistons just sat in the middle of the barrel during filling. In restoring and using dozens of these early models, I have never experienced a problem with flow from an air pocket. I therefore have no trouble believing that the saga of capillary action to avoid air locks is a product of Sheaffer's "over-engineering."

Plunger-fillers work just fine without pushing aside the rod and without feed tails hitting the closing nut.

It appears Sheaffer engineers themselves invented the need for those feed tails well after the introduction of the plunger-filler in 1933 and 1934, as none of those early patent drawings (Nos. 1,926,405 and 1,983,682) show any sign of a tail on the feed. Not having to be shoved aside by the feed tail, the head of the closing nut was not conical but flat. The protruding feed tail and the conical closing nut seems to be a later "refinement," developed first in 1937, and then and finding its way into a patent drawing in 1939 (Fig. 9). In that same patent it is clear there is very little space between the sharp tail (#32) protruding from the feed and the delicate flexible washer (#30). In time, the tail grew and eventually actually exited the rear of the section and struck well into the barrel even, at times, touching the barrel's wall much as the early Parker Lucky Curve feeds did.

Fig. 10 shows a selection of feed tails that run the gamut of historical styles. The top shows the latest ver-

ston on the 1942 Triumph nib. The middle two were manufactured in the late 1930s, and the bottom is a long tail before it was inserted into the end of the feed. Off to the right is an assembled piston head perched dangerously close to the sharp end of a tail.

The feed tails can be quite sharp indeed, and that's where the problem arises. As the blind cap is screwed down tight to the end of the barrel, the piston head with its flexible washer also rotates. If the tail protrudes merely a fraction of a millimeter too much, or the piston head moves forward only a fraction of millimeter more than designed, the very sharp tip of the feed's tail will abrade the flexible washer. After filling and closing only a few times, the washer will either be torn by the feed's sharp tail or impaled in a way that pulls it off the piston head around the conical closing nut. It could be that when first manufactured, tolerances were fine enough to prevent this from taking place. But after half a century, plastics do shrink and parts of the pen shrink at slightly different rates. This means, in practice, that when restoring a plunger-filler, the very slightly shortened lengths of the barrel will result in ripped up flexible washers.

There is some evidence that after introducing extended tails, Sheaffer engineers realized their folly. Patent drawings in 1941 and 1942 portray tail-less feeds, and the patent of Sheaffer's new conical nib (#2,303,373 and 2,303,374) on the Triumph shows no tail whatsoever. One might see this as an effort to correct a mistaken engineering idea, though by the time the Triumph nib was introduced in 1942, the Triumph grew a modified tail that was quite a bit shorter than earlier models.

Eventually Sheaffer found a way to keep a tail, albeit a small one. They placed the blind cap on a free turning gimbal so that when the blind cap was screwed down to the barrel it would not rotate the plunger-rod within the barrel. The feed's shortened tail would then not rub against the washer. The patent drawings of 1944 and 1949 (#2,362,948 and 2,474,996) show a very small tail, with a slight bevel that does not extend much beyond the feed's main body.

Of course, patent drawings do not attest directly to actual manufacturing processes. Anyone who has opened enough Sheaffer plunger-fillers, especially those produced in the war years, knows that assembly floor technicians improvised in many matters. What the patent information seems to show, however, is that Sheaffer engineers were aware of problems with the elongated feed tail in plunger-fillers.

Care of Sheaffer Plunger-Fillers

By Gerry Berg

In order to keep the viewing window clear and internal parts working well, you should flush your plunger-filler regularly. I recommend once every four fillings. Greasing the rod is also recommended (see below).

Plunger-filler pens are easier to flush than lever-fillers. Since they fill the instant the piston rod is pressed down, there's no waiting around for an internal sac to fill up. And there's no fancy equipment necessary such as a lettuce spinner, the tool of choice for Parker Vacs.

As to inks, I will leave to the ink mavens the thorny question of which inks stain celluloid and which don't. Most of the currently available fountain pen inks are fine. My favorite inks for plunger-fillers are: Waterman Florida Blue, Aurora Blue, and Pelikan Brilliant Black.

Flushing

1. Fill the pen several times with cold water. Work the plunger back and forth in order to flush dried ink from the nib and barrel. The plunger's action within the barrel can do a very thorough job of scouring the barrel and agitating the fluid to remove ink. This is a great advantage over, let's say, a Parker 51 Aerometric, which depends solely on the force of incoming and expelled fluid.
2. After filling the pen with water, place the pen nib down in a glass and put in just enough cold water to cover the nib completely. Let it soak for a couple of hours. If you've been using a highly saturated ink, you might add a bit of pen cleaner, like Rapido-Eze, to the water. Another option is to use Richard Binder's flushing solution recipe: 1 tablespoon ammonia, 2/3 cup water, and 2 drops of plain Dawn dishwashing liquid. Nathan Tardif of Noodler's Ink has said that a very tiny bit of Clorox in water works wonders on Noodler's Bay State Blue.

Greasing

Plunger-fillers rods require occasional applications of a small amount of silicone grease. Do not use Vaseline or other petroleum-based lubricants. You can get silicone grease at a diving supply store or at hardware stores under plumbing supplies. Be sure it is pure silicone with no petroleum additives. Petroleum will eat your pen's rubber parts!

What is the remedy for current restorers? One simple answer is to shorten the tail slightly to remove any possibility of it contacting the washer in closing. Some feel that this would disrupt ink flow intended by the tail's original inventors. I have never seen such a problem. And, as far as pushing the rod aside to increase inflow of ink during filling, I can say conclusively that there is just as much room for ink flow when the piston is not pushed aside and comes to a rest in the dead center of the barrel. Pens restored in that fashion fill and write as well as any.

A quandary for the collector?

Thus far, I have approached the problem of restoring plunger-fillers from the point of view of those who restore them or like to know about such mundane matters. What about the average collector whose main interest in buying a pen is to use it or to add a working version to his collection? Collectors should not be scared off by the complex controversies surrounding their restoration. Nowadays, efficiently working plunger-fillers are widely available and are as reliable as a lever-filler. Though there are many ways of resolving the problems discussed, reputable restorers each have their own ways of doing things. Their good reputations are the product of hundreds of happy owners of plunger-fillers.

Keep in mind the major advantage of the plunger-filler. It is the most efficient filling system devised that allows relatively small

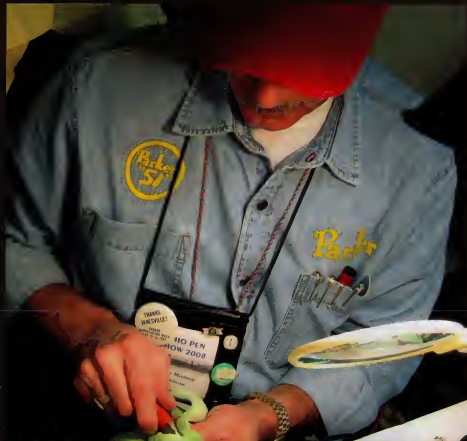
pens to hold relatively large amounts of ink. Properly maintained plunger-fillers should hold a lot of ink, though Laurence Oldfield (Marshall and Oldfield, *Pen Repair*, p. 94) reminds users that they should not expect a plunger-filler to fill the entire barrel with ink. After all, the piston head, rod and packing unit do take up space, though less space than other filling systems. Calculating the theoretical limits of the barrel's capacity and the practical efficiency of the plunger, Oldfield concludes that the barrel can fill only about two-thirds full (private communication, 2 Sept. 2008). Most pens that have been properly restored should look fairly full, at least as seen through the pen's view window in the barrel which allows the user to view about two-thirds of the barrel. Thus, even with only two-thirds of the barrel full, ink would cover most, if not all, of the visible window. The only exceptions to that are the small Tuckaways with large windows. In those cases the piston head and packing unit take up about half of the barrel volume, and even a perfectly working model would not fill more than two-thirds.

But how much of any pen is used to store ink? The fact is that a well restored Sheaffer plunger-filler will hold more ink than any similarly sized pen with the exception of an eye dropper! Surprised? The calculations for that claim make it more than an idle boast. But that would require yet another article. *LB*

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Sheaffer oversize Balance plunger filler.





Metal Plating Can Restore Brassed Parts

by Tom Rehkopf



THE OHIO SHOW HAD PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES to learn more about the use, repair and upkeep of pens. One topic that has always been somewhat clouded in mystery is the art and technique of metal plating. Many vintage pens have suffered plating loss over the years, and their appearance can be greatly enhanced by touching up those clips, levers and cap bands that have worn through to the underlying brass base (hence the term "brassing"). While not an exact substitute for replacing worn spots on gold-filled pens (most vintage pens were gold filled, not gold plated), it can nevertheless be an acceptable technique for restoring some of that lost luster.

Exhibitor/collector Bruce Mindrup conducted several brush plating workshop demonstrations at his table during the show, which afforded interested show goers an opportunity to observe the process in detail.

Brush plating is an electrochemical process that uses two handheld "wands" to electroplate localized areas on pens or other items that need coatings for surface restoration. The tips of the wands are covered with an absorbent material (cotton is most commonly used) that is saturated with a plating solution and then brushed or rubbed against the part. A portable power pack (rectifier) provides the direct current required for the plating process. The power pack has two leads: one (+) is connected to the plating wand and the other (-) is connected to the wand that clips to the part. The direct current supplied by the power pack is used in a circuit that is completed when the positive wand is touched to the work surface.

Using a Conklin RHR Endura, a Waterman Ripple, and a Sheaffer PFM as his "subjects", Bruce demonstrated the steps in the plating process:

Step One: Surface preparation

- ✓ Carefully inspect the part to be plated to determine if it is best plated on or off the pen.
- ✓ Remove the part to be plated from the pen when practical. These parts can be plated using the "tank" process, which is different from brush plating.
- ✓ The remainder of the steps apply to parts to be plated while on the pen.
- ✓ Thoroughly clean the part to be plated with Simichrome or similar cleaner.
- ✓ Inspect the part again to insure no dirt, corrosion or other residue remains.
- ✓ Mask parts not to be plated or sanded by applying tape to appropriate areas.
- ✓ Sand the part carefully using 600 grit Micromesh pad to "feather" any wear lines.
- ✓ Polish with Simichrome.
- ✓ Inspect the part again.

Step Two: Pre-plating

In most cases pre-plating should be done before the final plating is applied. The purpose of the pre-plate is to insure maximum adhesion of the final build-up deposit. Pre-plating provides the molecular bond between the base metal and the plating deposits.



Plating supplies from left: Simichrome polish; Micromesh polishing pads; stainless steel and nickel plating solutions; gold plating solution; rotary polishing tool.
 Polishing the PFM clip with rotary polishing tool.
 Applying pre-plate solution to the PFM clip. Note negative wand attached to pen clip.
 Applying gold plate solution to the Ripple cap band.

The pre-plating steps are as follows:

- ✓ Determine appropriate pre-plating material based on the final coat to be applied—nickel for gold plating, or stainless steel for various other finishes.
- ✓ Attach plating electrodes to power source.
- ✓ Set power source to four (4) volts.
- ✓ Attach negative clip to part to be plated.
- ✓ Brush on pre-plate material with other clip and tip (positive)
- ✓ Thoroughly brush the pre-plate solution onto the surface, ensuring complete coverage of area to be plated.
- ✓ Briefly rinse part in clean water and dry off with clean towel.

Step Three: The Finish Coat

With pre-plating complete, it's time to apply the final layer of plating.

- ✓ Increase the power source to six (6) volts for gold plating.
- ✓ Attach negative clip to part to be gold plated.
- ✓ Apply a small amount of gold plating solution (liquid or gel) to the cotton tip of the "positive" wand.
- ✓ Brush on gold plating solution with the positive tip. Thoroughly plate the surface, ensuring coverage to all areas to be plated. Apply additional plating solution to tip as required during this step.
- ✓ After all areas have been covered, briefly rinse the part in clean water and dry off with a soft cloth.
- ✓ Inspect carefully; the gold plated part should appear bright and shiny.


You can go back and apply additional plating to spots that you may have missed.

Plating Tips

"If you select the four and six volt levels for pre-plating and plating, your piece should turn out fine," Bruce explained. "You plate by voltage, not ampe. Selecting a certain voltage automatically adjusts amperage."

Still, things may turn out a bit off, requiring some adjustment. If your plating has a dull luster, increase the voltage. If you have the voltage too high, the plating solution will coagulate on the cotton insulator, and the plating will be pitted or burnt.

"The key to a great job is surface preparation, surface preparation and surface preparation," Bruce added. "Be cautious when polishing a finished piece, since the electroplated layer is quite thin compared to a gold-filled finish. You can polish lightly using a jeweler's cloth or equivalent, but don't use Simichrome or any other product that contains abrasive materials."

As with any process that uses chemicals of any kind, use common sense and wear eye protection and lightweight rubber gloves. Thoroughly wash your hands after handling any of the plating materials. 

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PLATING SUPPLIES

Clips
Wires
Plating solution
Power supplies

These can be found at local jeweler's supply houses as well as on the web (try "brush plating supplies" in your search engine).



From top: Applying gold plate solution to the Endura cap band; Adding additional gold plate solution to the wand tip. The solution is in gel form; Bruce polishes the final product.

FROM THE **PRESIDENT**

HOPES AND DREAMS

Thanks to the editor's deadline for this edition and my own powers of procrastination, I am writing this column on Martin Luther King Day, in preparation for the inaugural festivities. As I dream and hope for the future of our amazing country, I also dream and hope for the future of our hobby and this organization.

In that spirit, I want to welcome Paul Erano's editorial comments in the last edition of *The Pennant*. Paul has been an idol of mine since I was first steered to his seminal book a decade ago, and we have become good pen show buddies since. Paul writes that he hopes the PCA can move into the community, "where real education can occur." He suggests pen displays in libraries and talks to community groups, as well as a National Museum of Writing, all ideas that I think are fantastic and deserve serious exploration, by the PCA board, membership, and local clubs around the country. In the spirit of the new Administration, I share with Paul the belief that "anything is possible."

Let me take a moment to share with you efforts that are in the works to those ends as I write, but which should have been realized by the time you read this article. First and foremost, I hope you have explored our new website. Along with an improved user interface, we now have the beginnings of a digital library available to members and non-members alike. With this resource, we are in the process of partnering with a pen club in Germany and getting access to their collection of material, the first in our ability to share materials electronically with fellow collectors around the world. In addition to informational resources, our website now allows people to join on the site and to use Paypal directly instead of having to send paper checks. Please let us know if you experience any difficulty using the site, as we know that finding and fixing bugs is an inevitable process of a new website.

The second important change to the organization is the addition of our first volunteer dedicated to finding and assisting other members who want to become involved in the organization. Allan Quatt took the initiative to approach the board with the idea of harnessing the energy of members who have a special interest in working with the PCA and making sure they get in touch with the appropriate board member. I am grateful for his efforts, and hope that with the extra brain-and-person-power we are able to extend our outreach, perhaps in some of the ways Paul listed above.

The third important membership enhancement is the hiring of our first part-time "employee" dedicated to membership and outreach services. The selection process is underway as I write, but as you hold this magazine, we now have an individual dedicated to responding to member needs and performing membership outreach at as many shows as possible. S/he will report directly to the membership chair, Kim Sosin, and will be part of the historical memory of the organization as board members come and go.

Finally, let me offer a word of thanks and appreciation to the outgoing president, Rick Propas. As I am learning, it is no easy task to propel a small, opinionated, and passionate association in any direction whatsoever. Rick deserves kudos for keeping a steady hand at the helm through a year of great change and forward momentum. Dr. Propas is now enjoying an academic semester abroad in Bath, England, where he will be defending his Pelikan collection against the temptations of Conway Stewart, which enjoys a home court advantage.

Best to you all,

Carla



JOIN A CLUB

Looking to network with fellow pen collectors?

Check out a local pen club. Not listed here? Email your club information including contact name, email and phone number to: info@pencollectors.com

Baltimore Fountain Pen Society

Contact: Teri Lara Bennett
LaraBennett@comcast.net
 website: baltpens.org

D.C. Metro Pen Club

Contact: Harry Shubin
shubin@msweb.com
 Ph: 703.812.5306

Florida Pen Collectors Club

Contact: Giovanni Abrate
tryphon.ie@ipc
ipc@tryphon.it

Kansas City Pen Club

Contact: Dennis Bowden
sales@parkvillepen.com

Las Vegas Pen Club

Contact: Debbie Lambert
decula2@earthlink.net

Long Island Pen Club

Contact: Nancy Handy
nhandy@opsonline.com

Michigan Pen Collectors

Contact: C. Eric Fonville
fonville@comcast.net
michpens.com

Midlands Pen Club (Omaha area)

Contacts: Kim Sosin, kim@penquest.com
 or Carl Kibler, CAKibler@aol.com

Minnesota Pen Club

Francis Bullbulian
 Ph: 615.645.2460

New Orleans Pen Club

Contact: Thomas Bäckham
rbickill@hotmail.com
 Ph: 225.677.9448

North Texas Fountain Pen Collectors

Contact: Lowell Lindsey
llindsey2@verizon.net

Ontario, Canada

Contact Names: Dong Richte/Mike Wilker
 Email: pen@londonpenclub.com
londonpenclub.com
 Blog: londonpenclub.wordpress.com

Ottawa Fountain Pen Society

Contact: George Cornwall
bigub@ottawafountainpensociety.org
ottawafountainpensociety.org

Pan Pacific Pen Club, N. California

Contact: Mark Helfen
pppc@marketfire.com

Philadelphia Pen Collectors Group

Contact: Robert Mand
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philadelphiapens.com

Portland Pen Club

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carla_mortensen@hotmail.com

Research Triangle Pen Club

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 Deb Kinney
kinney@law.duke.edu

Richmond Pen Club

Contact: Sam Marshall
richmondpenclub@marshall-2800c.com

St. Louis Area Pen Club

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 Ph: 206.365.5998

Southeast Pen Collectors Club

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mbocas@gmail.com

Southern California Pen Collectors Club

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 Fred Krinke
fredspen@yahoo.com

Tampa Bay Pen Enthusiasts

Contact: Ray Roewert
rroewert1@tampabayrr.com
 Ph: 727.743.8890

From the Stacks

LIBRARY UPDATE

BY DAN REPERT, PCA LIBRARIAN

Well, we didn't quite make it but...

The project to have the library available online is well underway. All of the "copies of copies" that were the basis of the library archives have been scanned. Thankfully, we enlisted the help of a local (Ft. Madison) printer/stationer to have the material copied and uploaded to a working storage area. I say thankfully because I haven't the faintest idea what went on. Our resident expert, Abicia by name, came through in great form and provided our web guru with what we needed just as we needed it.

In the meantime, with the help of Roger Wooten, we have scanned several of Fred Krinke's catalogs which he graciously loaned us for that purpose. Roger did a dozen or so Sheaffer catalogs while I did several Parkers, Onotos, Wahls and others. These are high quality scans of original catalogs so they should present very well when downloaded from the PCA website.

At the same time, Dede Rehkopf and Fran Conn have been putting together files of old *Pennants*, which will also be available online. While many of these back issues were available from the printers, others required many hours of scanning page by page. Our thanks go out to Dede and Fran for handling this aspect of the "scan for the website" project.

I have to admit that since I'm not on the board I'm not sure how all this will work. Or, more accurately, what the vision is as far as finding the material, downloading it, paying for it or storing it but I am very excited about it finally coming to fruition. Now if somebody could just tell me what to do with all this stuff in my computer so I have a little working space, the thrill would be complete. A techno-greek I am not. Oops, I think my cell phone is ringing. If I just knew how to answer it.

THE PCA'S NEW WEBSITE

BY LINDA BAUER

The PCA Board is pleased to announce that the new Pen Collectors of America website is now available to members. You can access it at pencollectorsofamerica.com. The new site features membership services, a discussion forum, information on web resources, and a downloadable library of pen-related documents.

This interactive website is the culmination of more than a year of planning and development. One of the major goals of the PCA Board has been to improve services to members. When we asked members what they wanted from a website, the number one request was for a downloadable digital library. The current digital archive currently has more than 500 documents with hundreds more coming. The documents are in PDF (Adobe Acrobat) format that can either be downloaded or viewed online.

Our online forum will be moderated by volunteers, and will be an opportunity for members to discuss their favorite topics: pens, pens and more pens. Members can personalize their interaction by uploading an avatar (an image or picture to represent them).

The digital library and forum are services available only to PCA members upon login. Members can also update their membership contact information and online profile, and renew their membership online.

MORE RESOURCES FOR COLLECTORS

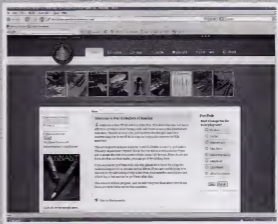
The PCA site contains a pen show calendar and a page of useful links to pen resources on the web. PCA members will be able to suggest additional links, and will be able to submit articles to the site. Just as the old site did, our new site has information about our Board of Directors, policies and organization financial statements. Pen collectors who are not already PCA members can join the PCA directly via the website and pay via Paypal.

Last year, the PCA Board requested proposals from web designers to redesign our site, and awarded the contract to Dr. Barry Eckhouse, a pen collector, teacher, researcher, and practitioner in the area of new media, including web authoring. Barry will serve as webmaster for the site.

The site is built on Joomla! open-source software and runs on an Apache server using Linux and MySQL databases. The Joomla! content system incorporates custom scripts to meet the needs of the PCA.

As we are going from paper to electronic storage of member information, your first login will take a few seconds. See this informative tutorial for details: pencollectorsofamerica.com/howto/pencollectors.html.

We invite you to visit the site, look around and let us know what you think.



Upcoming Shows

Location and dates may be subject to change; please contact the show organizers to verify information below. The PCA keeps an up-to-date listing of current and pending U.S. pen shows on the PCA website: pencollectors.com, courtesy of Susan Wirth.

Long Island Pen Show

March 21–22
Hofstra State University
Terry Brack, 631.235.4690
Mike Bloom, 516.505.5005

Atlanta Pen Show

March 20–22
Crowne Plaza Atlanta Perimeter NW
Boris Rice, 281.496.7152

Chicago Pen Show

April 30–May 3
Westin O'Hare/Rosemont
Don Lavin, 847.272.2745

Boston Pen Show

May 30–31
Holiday Inn Somerville
Rob Morrison, 828.298.0331

Raleigh Pen Show

June 4–7
Embassy Suites, Cary, NC
Terry Mawhorter, 614.619.5025

Portland Pen Show

July 9–12
Embassy Suites Downtown
Carla Mortensen, 503.282.0020

Miami Pen Show

July 17–19
The Biltmore, Coral Gables
Bert Oser, 800.782.7680

DC Supershow

August 6–9
Sheraton Premiere Tyson's Corner
Bob Johnson, 864.963.3834

Dallas Pen Show

October 2–3
Sheraton Dallas North
Pete Kirby, 972.529.6364

NYC/NJ Pen Show

October 9–11
Renaissance Newark Airport
Mary Ann & Steve Zucker, 718.434.3713

Toronto Pen Show

October 24
Hilton Toronto Airport
Bill Smith, 416.878.0695

Columbus Pen Show

November 5–8
Crowne Plaza Dublin Hotel
Terry Mawhorter: 614.619.5025

Show organizers are encouraged to submit show details for this column to the editor.

PCA Pen Show Supporters

The PCA expresses its gratitude to the sponsors of the following pen shows for graciously donating table space. Thanks for your generosity!

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Ohio • Terry Mawhorter

Pennant Back Issues

Back issues of *The Pennant* are available. Most are photocopies. All are \$10 each + \$5 postage and handling in the U.S. per order, overseas postage will vary. All requests for reprints should be addressed to:

Dan Reppert, PCA Librarian, PCA Library, P.O. Box 447, Fort Madison, IA 52627-0447; e-mail: wasp1908@mchsi.com

1993—March, July, October

1994—February, May, August

1995—Spring/Winter, Fall/Winter

1996—Spring, Winter/Fall

1997—Spring, Winter

1998—Spring, Fall

1999—Spring, Fall, Winter

2000—Spring, Summer, Winter

2001—Spring, Summer, Winter

2002—Spring, Summer, Winter

2003—Spring, Summer, Winter

2004—Spring/Summer, Winter

2005—Spring/Summer, Winter

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The PCA membership year runs from January–December. Membership renewal notices are sent each November to those due to renew. If you join the PCA between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, your membership is automatically extended through the following year.

As a current member, don't forget to send any updated personal information to info@pencollectors.com. If you've moved, changed your name, changed your email, added a FAX line, or made any other changes, it will not be correct in the listings unless you tell us! We are pleased to offer membership levels with added benefits. As a non-profit, all-volunteer organization, the PCA is only as good as the support it receives. Your contributions keep *The Penman* arriving on your doorstep three times a year, help support the PCA projects and enable the PCA to continue to grow and improve. When you renew your membership this year, we hope you'll consider one of our special new membership levels, which are detailed at the left. Even if your membership is not up for renewal, it's easy to upgrade to one of the special membership levels—simply drop us a line or email us at: info@pencollectors.com. Thanks for your support!

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Contact Dan Reppert for details: info@pencollectors.com.

LINDA BAUER Linda Bauer has been collecting pens for more than 20 years. She has an eclectic collection that includes Parker, Esterbrook, and Papermate pens. During her past two years on the Pen Collectors of America Board of Directors, she was webmaster for the PCA website and was active on the committee which planned the new website. She coordinates the PCA Pens for Kids program. In her day job she is technical support manager for a software company in Champaign, Ill.



GERRY BERG teaches history at a small liberal arts college in Virginia. At the start of his career he found that European archives did not permit the use of ball points and recommended fountain pens (or pencils) instead, driving him to consider a fountain pen as merely a tool. More recently he has discovered that some people consider the fountain pen an object of beauty as well. He likes to collect and restore Sheaffer plunger-fillers.



VICTOR CHEN recently retired from his position as Professor of History at Chabot College. Chen continues his Tech Notes column, a regular feature in *The Penman*.



KATE GLADSTONE teaches and remediates handwriting internationally, working and traveling from her home in Albany, NY. To better help left-handers, she taught herself to write left-handed.



RICHARD JARVIS has spent more than 20 years in journalism, including time as a newspaper reporter and editor. He has suffered from a life-long pen affliction that seems to have no cure in sight. His collecting interests include vintage pens with stub and other specialty nibs as well as German piston-fillers. He lives in Roswell, Ga., and is a native of North Carolina.



DAVID MOAK remembers Sheaffer cartridge pens from his school days. His re-acquaintance with fountain pens came when his wife Mary Jane taught him a simple calligraphic hand. His collection gradually centered on Mable, Todd (& Bard). He researched and produced *Mable in America*, the definitive work on the U.S. company.



TOM REHKOPF is a computer system architect in Atlanta, Ga. He has written several articles for *The Penman*, and has been collecting pens for over 15 years. "My collection remains largely unfocused," he says proudly, "except of course for brown Parker '51's, which you can never have enough of."



DAN REPERT collects off-brand Sheaffers such as Univer, W.A.S.P., and Craig. He is the librarian and a former vice president of the P.C.A. He worked for Sheaffer for over 12 years, and is currently involved in historic building renovation in Fort Madison, Ia.



GUY YASKO was born in Chicago, but left it for Japan at a very impressionable age. His time in Japan as a youngster gave him what has become a life-long love affair with Japan. He is trained as a historian, but has worked as an English teacher, an editor, and translator. He enjoys the Japanese pens of the 1960s and 1970s, and continues to search for vintage pens with interesting nibs that fit his meager budget.



DEDICATED PCA MEMBER very interested in vintage pens, vintage pen collecting, vintage pen ephemera, vintage pen magazines, and perhaps WRITING for their favorite vintage pen magazine.



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The *Pennant* invites you to submit articles of interest to the PCA membership. Contributions should be submitted as email attachments, on floppy disk or on CD or DVD, using standard word processing software.

Articles: We welcome articles dealing with pen collecting, writing instruments, pen manufacturers, ephemera, news about your recent finds, and Letters to the Editor. The *Pennant* "Author's Guidelines" document is available upon request, and members of the editorial staff and PCA Board are available to assist you. Submit your article in Microsoft Word or TextEdit. Please do not use auto-numbering or embed your images in your text file.

Illustrations/Photos: When submitting images, be certain that they are scanned at no less than 300 pixels per inch. Photos look best on a non-reflective solid white background (lucite is good and foam board works well). If white is not available, any solid color will do. Images may be submitted as email attachments or on CD as JPG images. We cannot use images embedded in text documents or spreadsheets.

Deadlines: Available on request. Contributions are subject to editorial review and should be sent to PCA, Attn: Editor, The Pennant, PO Box 447, Fort Madison, IA 52627-0447 or via email to: editor@pencollectors.com.

All opinions expressed in *The Pennant* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the PCA, its directors, or members.

THE PCA BOARD

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FOR SALE: Vintage and some recent LEs added to my website. Please check out petpenshop.com. Satisfaction is guaranteed.

FOR SALE: VintageInks.com has a large selection of vintage ink. Use ink that was made for your vintage pen! Also, look for my new book, Vintage Inks.

WANTED: Polite, advanced collector, wants to purchase pre-1940, unusual and rare examples of pencils including victorian figural models. Must be in excellent, original condition. Contact Joe at joe120@aol.com

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Buy • Sell • Trade in *The Pennant* Marketplace. Your classified ad reaches over 1,100 pen enthusiasts. PCA members are entitled to one or more free classifieds annually based on membership level. Free ad may be up to 25 words in length. Marketplace ads \$50 per word. Deadlines for publication: Feb. 15, June 15 and Oct. 15. Mail to PCA Marketplace, PO Box 3324, Zanesville, Ohio 43702 and fax 740-454-2314 (must call first to turn on fax) or email: Terry Mawhorter, Advertising Mgr. tmawhorter@columbus.rr.com.

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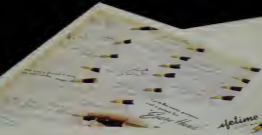
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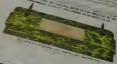
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